

C262-CO Loire valley

from Amboise to Azay le Rideau



The Loire River is a Queen loved by Kings



The Loire Valley has seen many of France's kings pass through its territories. Listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site, it is one of the rare places in the world where one finds magnificent chateaux, mansions, churches and abbeys in such quantity, giving testimony to an intense and rich spiritual and cultural life, as well as an art de vivre that has continued throughout the centuries.

Your tour will begin at Amboise, one of the oldest cities of the Loire Valley. Your wanderings will bring you to Chenonceaux to discover this magnificent chateau where women have distinguished themselves throughout history. You will cross through the vineyards of Montlouis and Vouvray where

lovely little dwellings lie quietly hidden. You will come to the city of Tours, a city of history and art that breathes in the walls of the buildings of the old quarter, the cathedral and the many museums. You will be thrilled by the beauty of the gardens at Villandry, impressed by the fortress of Langeais, and won over by the charm of Azay-le-Rideau.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrival at AMBOISE for a stroll through the city. Amboise is one of the cities of the Val de Loire region with the most ancient history because of its particular geographic location. The large island that separates the Loire into two branches, made crossing the Loire River easier here than in other places. Another important attribute of the location is the abrupt rise of the Plateau that dominates the fork of the Loire and Amasse rivers, creating a natural protection and an ideal spot for the construction of fortifications and later the town - *Lodging and breakfast in a 4-star hotel*

Day 2 – Visit of AMBOISE. You will visit the royal chateau that sits on the banks of the Loire, the first chateau built in the renaissance style. You will discover also the chateau of Clos Luce, where Leonardo de Vinci lived, and the Musee de l'Hotel de Ville (museum). You will go to the edge of the forest to tour the Louis XVI-styled pagoda, the only remnants of the sumptuous home of the Duke of Choiseul. You retrace your steps will reach your hotel near the Loire's waters by following the streets of Amboise. We encourage you to wander through the streets of the city and investigate its rich architectural heritage before reaching the hotel. *Lodging and breakfast in the same hotel.*

Day 3 – AMBOISE – CHENONCEAUX (14 km). The day starts with a walk to Chenonceaux through forest and vineyards. You will cross some hamlets and peaceful villages nestled at bottom of small valleys. You will have the whole afternoon to discover the chateau of Chenonceau known as Château des Dames (castle of Ladies). Chenonceau owes a large part of its charm to women: it was built in 1513 by Katherine Briçonnet, then made even more attractive by Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Médicis, and saved from the rigors of the French Revolution by Mrs Dupin. The lovely surroundings, the formal garden and the park surrounding it add to the impression of delicate grace emanating from the castle. Chenonceau is not only remarkable for its architecture and history but also for the fine quality of its collections as can be seen from the inside visit: Renaissance furniture, a vast ensemble of XVI th and XVII th centuries tapestries and a great number of masterpieces - *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel*



Day 4 - VOUVRAY – TOURS (12 km). Transfer by taxi to Vouvray. You will visit Vouvray, a charming little village built on the sloping hills overlooking the Loire. The village is known for its natural and sparkling white wines, which are recognized as among the best of Touraine. In this setting, there still remain a few troglodytic dwellings nestled into the hillsides. You will cross through the vineyards and pass by rich agricultural properties, as well as the chateau of Montcontour. You will set out again through the vineyards for Rochecorbon, a small village situated at the base of the cliffs. On the cliffs sits a lookout called Lanterne. You will meet again with the banks of the Loire, pass in front of the ancient Marmoutier Abbey, and continue on to the city of Tours. Your hotel is located in the old quarters of the city. *Lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel*

Day 5 - Visit of TOURS. A taxi will bring you to the Priory of Saint Come in the morning. You will begin your day with a tour of the priory, once the dwelling place of Ronsard, one of the greatest French poets of the Renaissance. You will follow the Loire back into the old neighborhoods of Tours and visit the ancient streets that lie around the Place Plumereau, the cathedral and Saint Julien Church. You will see wonderful old homes and mansions, each one more beautiful than the last, some of which now hold within their walls museums that are open to the public, such as the Musee des Beaux-Arts and the Musee du Compagnonnage (museum). A full day awaits you in the city of Tours! *Lodging and breakfast in the same hotel.*

Day 6 - VILLANDRY – LANGEAIS (14 km). Transfer by taxi to the chateau of Villandry. This chateau holds a collection of treasures, such as a variety of Spanish paintings, 18th century furniture, and – most notably – lovely Renaissance gardens. You will find five magnificent gardens await you : the vegetable garden, the garden of fountains, the ornamental garden, the garden of medicinal plants, and the labyrinth. You will then walk to the banks of the Cher and Loire rivers and follow them to Langeais. The town sits beneath the imposing structures of a 15th century fortress and a 10th century keep, which remain from the fortified castle that once defended the Loire Valley from western invasions. *Lodging and breakfast in a charming guesthouse. Dinner included.*

Day 7 - SACHE – AZAY LE RIDEAU (15 km). Transfer by taxi to the chateau of Sache on the banks of the Indre River. Dating to the 16th and 18th centuries and surrounded by a pleasant park, this chateau now holds a grand museum dedicated to the famous 18th century French writer Balzac. He came here often to escape his creditors and find the tranquility necessary for writing. You will make your way towards Villaines-les-Rochers, where many artists work with wicker, and continue on to Azay-le-Rideau. Here, you will find one of the most beautiful Renaissance chateaux of the Loire valley. Built on the banks of the river Indre, the structure stands tall in grace, and the interior staircase is a masterpiece of its kind. It is home to a lovely collection of 16th century furniture and tapestries. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel.*

Day 8 – AZAY LE RIDEAU. Tour ends after breakfast.

Season

From beginning of April to end of November

Including

- 7 nights in handpicked 3 and 4-star hotels
- 7 breakfasts – 3 gourmet dinners
- Hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- Taxi transfers as written in the tour description
- A set of maps (1/25 000 scale) and detailed route notes
- A daily itinerary together with information about facilities and places of interest along the trail.
- Emergency assistance.

Visa fees - transportation fees to and from the walk area - Insurance (strongly recommended on all trips) - Transfers except those mentioned above – Drinks - Additional meals Entrance fees - Spending of personal nature e.g. laundry, souvenirs, phone calls... are not included

Getting there and away

By train: Scheduled trains from Paris-Austerlitz station to Amboise. Bus or trains to reach Tours or St Pierre des Corps where you catch a TGV train to Paris.

By car : A10 motorway (Paris-Bordeaux) from Paris - exit 18 and continue to Amboise along the D31 road

Where park your car : free toll unattended car park in Amboise on the Loire banks. Return journey from Azay to Amboise by train.

Walk difficulty

Grade 1 – This tour is easy. No walk more than 17 km (10.5 miles). You will walk 4 or 5 hours at relaxed pace and spend time at places of interest along the route. Walking experience is not necessary as distances are short and the terrain is gentle. Everybody can walk this tour

